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ABSTRACT

Documents about the conditions and problems faced by the reporters of the Spanish-American War show that this war was particularly difficult to report, and that a historical misconception exists about journalism of the 1890s. Efforts to understand the reportage of the late nineteenth century in the United States are complicated by what has been written about the Spanish-American War itself. Since most historians dealt with the conflict after World War I, the war with Spain paled in comparison and was not handled with the seriousness or depth of perception it deserved. Some historians of journalism have been especially narrow minded and arrogant in their assessment of this historical period, reflecting the attitudes that the so-called upper classes of the nineteenth century United States had about the middle and working classes. Facts have been presented to divest the war correspondent of stereotypical traits and to document the problems involved in covering the Cuban uprising. Part of the misconceived stereotyping of the press is due in part to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the terms "romantic" war reporter on "display"--the tendency of reporters to arrange themselves in eye-catching backdrops of battle scenes for journalistic merchandising. What must be realized is that the "romantic" news report of the 1890s was meant to be much like romance literature, demonstrating clearly the accepted values of the American community in real life adventures. (RI)

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PEN AND SWORD:

REPORTING THE SPANISH AMERICAN WAR*

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INTRODUCTION

"I don't know whether the folks at home swallow all their reports," wrote a soldier from the battlefield, "but the soldiers just laugh to see how they can stretch the truth, or rather lie, for most of their reports bear no resemblance to the truth, but are inventions of their own."[1] From what has been written about the coverage of the press in wartime, one would guess that the field of battle was El Caney or Santiago, that the soldier writing to his mother belonged to Brigidier General William Shafter's Fifth Army Corps, and that the reporters mentioned worked for the so-called sensational press of William Randolph Hearst or Joseph Pulitzer. In reality, the commanding officer is General Meade, the battlefield is somewhere south of the Mason-Dixon line, and the conflict is the Civil War. Despite the fact that in all wars some news reports are largely fictional, the war the United States waged against Spain enjoyed particularly poor press coverage according to traditional interpretations of the journalism of the times.[2]

Our endeavors to understand the reportage of late nineteenth century America are complicated further by what has been written about the Spanish American War itself. First of all, historians who dealt with the conflict generally did so after World War I. In light of that calamity, the war with Spain began to look more and more like a comic opera. Consequently, it has not been handled with the seriousness or depth of perception it deserves. The notable exception is Philip Foner's two volume work on the subject. As he suggests, historians have given us the impression that the least important element contributing to the war was the Cuban Liberation Army, under the leadership of Antonio Maceo, Calixto Garcia, and Maximo Gomez.[3] Depending on whom one is reading, the war was a result of one or more of many different

forces, including the press, the junta, popular sentiment, and a profit motive. Even as recently as 1975, one historian wrote that Richard Harding Davis helped to start the Spanish American War.[4]

Again, some journalism historians, when dealing with the coverage of the Spanish American War especially, have been narrow-minded and even arrogant in their assessment of this period of press history. Their preconceptions about journalistic objectivity have limited and in many cases precluded the possibility of our getting an understanding of the sensibility of the 1890s. Newspaper reports, the very documents which give possibly the clearest indication of what the war correspondent in America was like at the end of the last century, are dismissed as inexcusable trangressions of a fixed code. Yet, the history of journalism presents irrefutable evidence that reportage, like the novel, is capable of many different threads of development.

The problem is further complicated by the intellectual elites of the nineties who likewise held the working-class press in contempt. E. L. Godkin treated the popular press with disdain. "Nothing," he said, "is so disgraceful as the Journal and the World." Gross misrepresentation of the facts, deliberate invention of tales calculated to excite the public, and wanton recklessness in construction of headlines are just a few in a catalog of misdeeds Godkin attributed to the sensational press.[5]

Hearst especially and his kind of newspaper have always been kept in the dog house by intellectuals. His was the type of newspaper the riff raff read. Much of the criticism applied to Hearst and the press of the 1890s is an attempt to judge it by the standards and methodologies of the sciences.

A good deal of the hand-wringing over the reporting of the Spanish American War reflects attitudes that the so-called upper classes had about the middle and working classes. Phrases such as the "dime novel" and the

"penny press" emphasize the cheapness of their literature.[6] The journals of Wall Street on the other hand are termed organs or mouthpieces of their readers. However, the press of the ordinary people is said to manipulate, influence, and even hoodwink its readers, affecting them like a gunshot would affect a herd of cattle. Ordinary workingmen and women are shown to exhibit all the intelligence and character traits of the Village Idiot. Such critics believe the real values of journalism exist independently of newspapers. In this scheme of things, Pulitzer's World or Hearst's Journal are deemed to be shabby examples of reportage in the nineties.

Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst believed in the sensational or dramatic method of presenting the news. Pulitzer stood for fair taxation, honesty in government, and equal opportunity for all.[7] Hearst likewise was champion of the common folks. If his newspapers were responsible for starting the Spanish American War, then William Jennings Bryan should have been elected president and the Stanford's railroad should have been driven out of business (both of these were Hearst's crusades).

Clearly much of what we have learned so far is inadequate to a complete understanding of what it was like to report the Spanish American War. In fact, those historians who write of the war begin to look more and more like a minor character in Dickens's Dombey and Son: Mr. Briggs, a classmate of the younger Dombey whose recitation of latin and greek irregular verbs gave him nightmares and whose learning, "like ill-arranged luggage, was so tightly packed he couldn't get at anything he wanted."

It is time to brush away the cobwebs and blow the dust off the collections of newspapers, magazines, and other published materials of the last decade of the nineteenth century. What I am suggesting is a different approach to the history of the press of this period. This paper is an attempt to understand what it was like to be alive in 1895, "to show, in short,

how action made sense from the standpoint of the historical actors."[8] While a paper of this size precludes a comprehensive analysis, we can begin by documenting the conditions and problems faced by the reporters in the field of battle. To a Richard Harding Davis or a Sylvester Scovel, this war was particularly difficult to report.

OUTBREAK OF WAR

In late February 1895, Cuban belligerants inaugurated the second insurrection against Spain. In the United States, little note was taken of the rebellion. Newspaper accounts mentioned only that an insurrection had taken place, and that, because in occurred in the Pinar del Rio and Santiago provinces, it was island-wide. The point was significant; it meant that this time, in contrast to an earlier rebellion in 1868, the entire island supported the Cuban insurrectionists.

Eventually, the major papers in the U.S. dispatched reporters to cover the affair. The story of how they went about reporting the Cuban crises is long and complicated, but we can begin by divesting ourselves of the notion that they left the mainland U.S. in wide-eyed wonder, determined to match their actions to their ideals and principles.[9] The correspondent who wished to cover the conflict in Cuba had too many problems to solve to be concerned much about a set of abstract principles. Taken altogether, it is a wonder that anyone bothered to report the Cuban rebellion. In accordance with the prevailing manifest destiny theory, many people thought the Cubans were a second-class people. Certainly in 1895, where our story begins, few thought the uprising was more than a second-rate skirmish led by a group of ill-begotten Cuban bandits.

Joseph Pulitzer, editor of the New York World and his reporter Sylvester Scovel, were two exceptions to the rule. We know much about Pulitzer, but Scovel remains obscured by shadows, so that we may never get a completely accurate view of his role in reporting the war. Nevertheless,

we can learn remarkably much about him from the diaries and letters of his more famous colleagues Richard Harding Davis and George Kennen, and from the books and articles of his lesser known friends. The material on Scovel is important because it reveals an important distinction made by men and women of the newspaper world between the professional reporter and the literary star.

To the professional reporter, the literary stars, like story-tellers Richard Harding Davis and Stephen Crane, were mere decorations used by papers to gain prestige in the eyes of the public. Arthur Brisbane, Hearst's right-hand man, once revealed that virtually no one at the newspapers really believed the famour writers had any sense whatsoever for news. For that reason, they were handed over to a "real" reporter -- Crane to Scovel and Davis to Christopher Michaelson -- whose job it was to see to it that their charges got to where the news was, wrote their reports hurriedly, and sent their copy back to the editor's office as quickly as possible. As things turned out, Stephen Crane matched the news editor's expectations. Although he was charming and friendly to reporters, Crane was lazy and too devoted to the bottle to get any real reporting done. Sylvester Scovel, who gave Crane his assignments on the field, had a difficult time of it getting the novelist's copy.[10]

In the fight against Spain in the cause of Cuban independence, reporters admired not the brilliant writer whose literary descriptions of a skirmish evinced suitable emotions in the hearts of the reader. Rather, the successful journalist was the man or woman who, in the face of a great deal of personal risk, managed to get the news back to the States and into print before anyone else did. Sylvester Scovel had all the marks of a first-class reporter and was greatly admired as the best reporter of the

war. This division between the news reporters and descriptive writers was made by Richard Harding Davis, who surprised his editors because he demonstrated time and again that he had a nose for news.[11]

History has labelled Davis the "beau ideal," the best in the war correspondent tradition. During the war with Spain he often pointed out that success as a war correspondent did not depend on occupation so much as on intelligence and character.[12] He believed that a good correspondent was a man who by his energy and resource [saw] more of the war, both afloat and ashore, than . . . his rivals and who [was] able to make the public see what he saw."[13]

The Spanish American War marked the beginnings of his career as a war reporter. In retrospect, his reputation for competency was beginning to spread. At the same time, it was not until after his death in 1916 that reporters themselves recognized and revered him as a person whose skills in reporting were worth treasuring.[14] In the nineties, it is important to note, reporters circulated stories among themselves that put Davis in an unfavorable light. They thought of him as a kind of Little Lord Fauntleroy rather than as the ideal reporter.[15]

Whether a reporter was a professional newsman or a literary star, all who covered the war believed in the importance of getting the facts.[16] To the twentieth century eye, the realism of these reports may seem closer to romantic excursions into the field of battle. To the reporter writing the story, they were faithful renditions of the situation in Cuba. His conception of truth was not so much truth of correspondence as it was truth of significance. He gathered the facts of the story and then told the reader what they meant. Like all writing of the vein of romance, the report was de te fabula. In other words, the reporter was saying, "This story is about

you, the reader."[17]

If faithful attention to factual details was so highly valued, then how did the press coverage of the war acquire a reputation for inaccuracy? I have already suggested a number of reasons: historians have drawn the picture of the war based on erroneous beliefs or prejudicial attitudes toward the press as a bastard offspring of literature; only recently have we managed to view the Cuban uprising as more than a second-rate skirmish elevated by American intervention to the level of a comic opera. Of course, there was some inaccurate reporting of the war -- just as there were inaccurate reports on the Civil War, World War I and World War II. Besides sincere human error on the part of a few correspondents, misleading reports resulted from the sheer conventions of narrative writing. Over and above this, however, the Commissary Department can be faulted for part of the problem.

The Commissary was poorly organized, sadly understocked with supplies, and woefully inefficient during the Cuban campaign. The army transported supplies from the base at Siboney to the troops in the field via supply wagons. The rainy weather, the muddy roads, which were also glutted with the wounded, made travel to the front difficult. Whenever a wagon full of supplies appeared on the horizon, "each company ran for it and claimed it as theirs only to find themselves put off until proper requisitions could be made out for its distribution."[18]

For reporters, it was not always easy to get along with the Commissary Department. Even though the War Department had issued passes to the correspondents entitling them to draw rations if they paid for them, often the commissary officers refused to allow reporters to do so. On the theory that there was only enough food for the soldiers, a theory which was true, reporters

were turned away empty-handed and with their pockets bulging with dollar bills.[19]

The problem of getting sufficient food was solved by the more industrious of the lot, who left Tampa Bay loaded down with all kinds of supplies. The correspondents working for small weeklies and dailies had neither the foresight nor the means to take food supplies with them. Consequently, when the army decided it would give out rations to the press only at Siboney, the "water front" was, logically, the place they chose to take up residence.[20] They wrote their reports on guess and heresay; their sources were delirious, wounded soldiers. Other correspondents took up "subscriptions" to help them out. For the most part, however, those who elected or were forced to stay at Siboney with the wounded were despised by other reporters and attacked by the public at large for fabricating their stories. "They live in pig pens," said Davis, "living like pigs, and so naturally they are ill."[21]

Even if we discount the problems concerning food, reporters, from the very beginning of the Cuban uprising, were faced with other problems troublesome enough to turn back hardiest men or women among them. In fact, the job of reporting the news was so difficult that Davis on his first trip to the island surmised that what a reporter had to do to get the news was not worth the risks he took.[22]

Part of the difficulty involved in getting to the insurgent camps rested on the military strategy of the insurgents, formulated by the Commander-in-Chief, Maximo Gomez. Gomez designed his forces to be highly flexible, ready for quick dispersal and reunion. The Cuban general saw that two elements were essential for success: the war had to cover the entire island, thus forcing the Spanish troops to be dispersed into smaller groups; and the war could be won only if it became economically devastating to Spain. To ensure

eventual Cuban victory, then, Gomez and his troops burned out the sugar crops on the island.[23] While the military strategy of the Cuban army was responsible for Cuba's eventual victory, it also made it harder for reporters to get to the insurgent camps and to accompany the armies on their campaigns.

In search of the elusive Gomez, the correspondent first had to pass successfully through Spanish lines. The commander of the Spanish forces, and his men were concerned about the publicity the insurgents were receiving in American Newspapers and thus were very watchful. As correspondent for the Herald, George Bronson Rea had managed to get a pass to cover the Spanish columns. He, and others like him could use this pass to get through the lines of sentries in various towns.[24] Once the Spanish were successfully eluded, reporters faced the difficulties of travel in the jungle. If they found an insurgent camp, the commanding officer usually saw to it that they were fed and given a few necessary supplies. Eating, sleeping, getting clean clothes, and a shave and haircut were all a matter of luck.[25]

Once reporters left the insurgents' camp and returned to Havana or other coastal towns, they depended for food and supplies on families sympathetic to the belligerent cause. Since the Cuban commissary was neither well-organized nor well-stocked, the family network could make the difference between life and death. Gomez, who knew this well, reminded reporters whom he did not trust that he could fix it so that correspondents could not get so much as a mouthful from the families living in the hills.[26]

When Richard Harding Davis went to Cuba in 1896 he planned to land in the Santa Clara province and locate the insurrectionists from there. He had gotten all kinds of letters from Cuban sympathizers to insure safe passage to insurgent camps. Gover Flint, who had been with the forces of Antonio Maceo, had arranged the trip from the Cuban end.[27] The World and Herald had also

sent their men to Cuba to reach and interview the rebel Gomez. Scovel, Rea, and Davis met daily once they got to the island and planned their journey inland. In the meantime, the mail steamer arrived carrying copies of the Journal. Its front page depicted Davis mounted on a horse and loaded down with cartridge belts and repeating rifles. Sylvester Scovel was the first to see the story the day the steamer arrived. He snatched up a copy and ran to find Davis. Seeing him a short distance away, Scovel held up the paper and shouted, "Your paper has queered you Davis. . . . I never heard of a paper treating a correspondent worse."[28] When the Spanish saw the paper they immediately put Davis under heavy surveillance. Twice he tried to pass through their lines and twice he was unsuccessful. Both times the Cubans helping him were scared off. For their part, neither Rea nor Scovel could afford to associate with Davis from that day on for fear that he would ruin their own chances of getting through the lines.[29]

Davis felt that Hearst was trying to force him to do what had already been published. Evidently Davis and the artist who accompanied him, Frederick Remington, were not working fast enough to suit Hearst's taste and so he tried to speed them on their way by publishing the story that they had already arrived in the insurgent camp. This may be the truth of the matter. However, until the Hearst papers are open to the public we will not know what the publisher's true motivation was -- and even then we may not learn the story behind the headlines. But it is at least possible that since Hearst had not heard from his correspondent, he surmised that Davis had passed through Spanish lines and was on his way to Gomez, and that it was safe to publish the account.

As a result of the story, Davis never reached the rebel strongholds. Instead he had to be content with getting what he called "a car window view

of things."[30] He travelled over the Cuban terrain via the rails which were controlled by the Spanish, who treated him with courtesy and kindness. They had sent his private cables, delivered his mail untampered. The problem with covering the uprising from the Spanish side was the necessary confinement to the rails, a factor which made it increasingly difficult to get at the truth. Davis tried to be fair to both sides[31] -- Spanish and Cuban -- but he found himself skeptical of most of what he was told. "You would think," he wrote, "that the picturesque and dramatic and exciting thing would be the one I would rather believe because I want to believe it, but I find that this is not so. I see a great deal on both sides and I do not believe half of what I am told."[32]

Besides passing Spanish lines, reporters on their way to Cuban camps also had to penetrate the trocha, the portion of Cuba's railroads that formed the backbone of Spanish defense. Stretching from one end of the island to the other, it cut across the Puerto Principe and Pinar del Rio provinces. To reach it, one had to travel by boat to one of its end points. Along the railway, the Spanish had constructed forts every few yards and manned them with sentinels. On either side of the trocha, a thick almost impenetrable jungle stretched out for miles. Between the rails and the edge of the jungle the Spanish had laid out several rolls of barbed wire fencing. Davis was allowed to photograph the trocha and later described the Spanish railroad as much more complicated than anyone might imagine. The difficulties of reaching it led Davis to remark that he admired anyone who claimed to have crossed it.[33] Predictably enough only five reporters managed to get through the rail lines: Sylvester Scovel (New York World), George Bronson Rea (New York Herald), Grover Flint (New York Journal), Kark Decker (New York Journal), and T. Robinson Dawley (Harper's Weekly).[34] Once on the other side, transport across country

was usually by foot. This could mean a hike of fifty to a hundred miles without much in the way of food or supplies.[35]

When safely in the hands of the insurgents, reporters faced the worrisome problem of getting copy safely out of the island. Many times he would carry his report to some prearranged point on the Cuban coast where a dispatch boat hired by his paper would pick it up. Much of the time he could not afford to leave camp for the coast because he risked losing an important story if he did so. In such cases he relied on a line of communications he had previously set up. Generally he would hire various tradesmen along a route who promised to relay the news report to the next man in the line. It was a risky setup because reporters trying to get reports or messages back to the coast were at the convenience of people who sometimes pocketed both the dispatches and the money and failed to take the trip to the next man in line. A second, more successful plan was to hire and use a special courier whom a reporter could send to the coast and back as needed.[36] Even if a courier arrived safely at the rendezvous point, it was next to impossible to get there exactly at the same time the dispatch boat arrived. The upshot of it all was that when conenctions were missed, reports either did not go to the States or they got into print much later than intended.

The dispatch boat solved the problem of getting around the Spanish censor, but it created problems of its own. For one thing the tugs were constantly in danger of collision because they were not allowed to carry lights at night.[37] For another thing, the noise the boats made coming into Key West kept reporters there up all night and thus allowed only a few hours for sleep.[38] To make a difficult situation even worse, the captains and crews of the hired tugs would at times mutiny on the way to Cuba and threaten to return to Key West unless their wages were raised. Sometimes their mutiny was caused by a genuine fear of what possibly lay ahead.[39] The trip to Cuba was dangerous; the threat of the Spanish Armada bearing unmercifully down on a little craft made for many a restless night. No one at the time realized that the dreaded Spanish Navy was a pitifully

run-down naval fleet.

The most aggravating problem with the dispatch boat--from the reporter's point of view--had to do with organization. Sometimes the boat would be where it was supposed to be. At such fortuitous moments, the journalist had only praise for its crew.[40] On the other hand, if the press boat was not at hand when it was needed, the journalist was frustrated and helpless to get his story back to Key West ahead of the other papers. At one point Davis called the Herald's news service a hit and miss management. Isolated at Gaunica, he found that he was the only journalist in the area with a hot story. The Herald's press boat failed to materialize, unfortunately, and the frustrated Davis bewailed his fate:

> Here I am the only representative of any paper in the world and not a boat of the three they have to take away the news! The Associated Press man is still here, confound him, but his boat won't take my stuff which, as the Herald is in the association and also the Ledger, is absurd management on the Herald's part. They used to work together, but Stone has stopped it.[41]

MILITARY-PRESS RELATIONS

Given the hurdles one had to jump to get to insurgent camps, the difficulty of passing through Spanish lines, the hardship of life in the jungle, the communications problems to be resolved, it is no wonder few men met with success. But all of these problems were compounded when General Weyler replace the easy-going Spanish leader Martinez Campos as Commander-in-Chief of the Spanish forces. Once he had assumed command Weyler, nicknamed "the Butcher," strictly forbade any newspaper reporters from accompanying either the Spanish or the Cuban armies. At once a hue and cry arose over such restrictions. However, for over a year prior to the restriction no newspaper had sent a representative to cover the rebellion from the Spanish side of the lines. When Weyler announced the new restrictions, reporters accused him of trying to cover up war crimes.[42] Two exceptions were George Bronson Rea and Richard Harding Davis, both of whom presented Weyler as a fine-mannered, dignified gentleman. James Creelman, on the other hand, described the Spanish leader as "the most monstrous personality of modern times."[43]

Creelman, who was born and raised in Canada, had by the time of the Spanish American War, worked for the New York Herald, the World, Cosmopolitan, and finally, Hearst's Journal. For his part, Weyler summarized his feeling toward Creelman in particular and reporters in general when he said that they were all a bunch of "meddlesome scribblers."[44]

As Creelman had accused Weyler of restraining him from telling the truth, so Rea accused Gomez, the Cuban General, of using reporters as vehicles for Cuban lies. For several reasons, Rea despised Gomez. For one thing, guerilla warfare looked to Rea like a game of hide-and-seek.[45] For another thing, Gomez was a temperamental character and often questioned the motives of American reporters. He repeatedly insulted the United States, the President, the Congress and the American press. So testy was the Cuban general the Rea accused him of prohibiting reporters from writing the truth, under penalty of death.[46]

Gomez, it is true, made no bones about his feeling toward Americans. He thought they were mercenary, and if they once set foot on Cuban soil, they would never leave. In a letter to Estrada Palma, the head of the Junta, and with whom Gomez frequently disagreed on policy and strategy, the general proclaimed that any Cuban who wanted United States intervention was ignorant of the motives of the United States and, what is more, was morally on the side of the Spanish.[47]

Besides Gomez's outspoken distrust of American motives and his use of unorthodox methods of fighting, Rea disliked the Cuban leader because Gomez could not stand to have anyone disagree with him. Eating at the general's mess enabled a reporter to study the temperamental character of Gomez. When Rea first joined the general's table, he was unaware that Gomez did not relish having his opinions or ideas contradicted. During the course of a meal, Rea argued with Gomez about several incidents in American history. After the general left the table, another correspondent -- most likely Scovel or Flint -- cautioned Rea to stand in solid with the "old man" by allowing him to "have in own way in an argument, if [Rea]

wished to get any news out of the camp."[48]

According to at least one historian, Gomez was usually indifferent to American reporters. The notable exception was Grover Flint. Gomez revered the reporter from the Journal because he was so industrious in taking notes and drawing pictures of Gomez and his men.[49] Besides Flint, Sylvester Scovel won the good graces and confidence of the general and his staff. Scovel, in fact, saw more of Gomez than any other reporter, accompanying him on his invasions and writing freely his assessment of the campaigns and the men who led them.[50]

On the evening of February 15, 1898, the street of Havana were filled with people celebrating the carnival season, which had opened the day before. Many were sporting masks. Sylvester Scovil of the New York World and his wife were sitting in a cafe with the Herald's George Bronson Rea. Suddenly an explosion shook the city, windows collapsed and doors rattled.[51] Pandemonium broke out and everyone ran toward the harbor. Scovel and Rea immediately hopped on a coach and drove to the scene of the explosion. By the time they got there, the Spanish guards already had roped the harbor area off. The U.S.S. Maine had exploded. When the two reporters found out that the Maine was the ship that had gone up in flames, they told the guards that they were officers from the ship, and so were allowed to inspect the wreakage.[52]

What exactly caused the explosion remains a mystery to this day. Although the finger of accusation has been pointed in a number of directions, the most likely explanation of the explosion is that the Maine blew up "due to the carriage within it of quantities of the new gunpowder needed for heavy guns and which often caused explosions in its first years." Whatever the cause, the following April the U.S. declared war on Spain and in June sent combat troops to the island. Brigidier General William Shafter was appointed by President McKinley to take charge of the Fifth Army Corps. Shafter's

first problem was how to transport 25,000 men on transport ships which could carry not even half that number. The transportation problem was insoluble and Shafter ordered his colonels to board any ship they could lay their hands on. Because he knew his troops were inexperienced combat soldiers, the general decided to land at Daiquiri, where the fighting would not be too fierce.[53] Upon disembarkment, the Commissary Department set up shop in Siboney.

Once the troops were mobilized on the island, reporters followed along with the U.S. military forces. The more the reporter stayed with the army, the harder it became for him to overlook irritating remarks directed at him or the shortcomings of the military. "Propinquity spoils illusions,"[54] and in the case of General Shafter especially, it did not take long to dispel the illusions correspondents might have had about the commanding officer. Correspondents despised and ridiculed General Shafter. Their reasons varied, although Freidel ascribed the bad press Shafter got to his rough manners and bearing. Freidel also mentioned Shafter's corpulence as a target for the jokes of reporters.[55] Shafter was not just fat, though; he was obese, weighing well over three hundred pounds.

Jimmy Hare said it for everyone when he noted that the general badly managed the troops.[56] John Hamment ridiculed Shafter as a man who, during the heat of the battle, was confined to his cot, with an attendant continually rubbing his head.[57] As far as newsmen were concerned, Shafter was not the man to command an invading army. He was fat to the point of being unable to move quickly and energetically. In the intense heat, he sweated profusely and consequently gave off an unpleasant odor. While he was polite to journalists and gave them permission to go where they wished, at the same time he was reticent about his plans and this irritated the correspondents.[58]

Richard Harding Davis thought of the whole army in unfavorable terms. As the Cuban campaign progressed, Davis became more and more vociferous in his complaints against the army in general and Shafter in particular. He complained that the men in charge lacked intelligence, knowledge, and imagination. Every time and all the time, they seemed to do the wrong thing. In July he wrote to his mother, "Old fat Shafter has at least arrived at the front in a buckboard. He is too absurd and silly."[59]

One of the more difficult battles of the war was the seige on Santiago. When the provincial town finally capitulated to Shafter, the general forbade all correspondents to enter the city or to be present at the flag-raising ceremony. The whole Santiago campaign hung over the heads of reporters like a nightmare. When compared with the Santiago affair, any other expedition resembled a picnic on the Thames. The blame for the hardship of the trip was laid at the feet of Shafter:

> No one ever exposed a horse to the treatment Shafter gave us. The way he starved us and overworked and ran us into danger like pigs down a chute to be converted into sausage. Hanging is too good for him.[60]

To be fair to Shafter, we ought to note that the general was probably somewhat concerned to protect the reporters from being the targets for mauser bullets. Also Shafter was fighting an impossible war. He thought -- and Pershing concurred -- that the expedition to Cuba was poorly organized. He was forced to fight Spain with outdated, insufficient equipment in a climate that decimated his troops, many of whom fell to yellow fever, malaria, typhoid, and heat exhaustion.[61]

At best military-press relations were fraught with tension and anger. The most serious falling out between the press and the American forces occurred at the close of the Santiago campaign. Although Shafter made it

clear that no correspondent was to set foot inside the city during the flag-raising ceremony, Sylvester Scovel somehow managed to slip by the sentries. Accounts vary about what happened during the ceremony in the square. When Shafter discovered Scovel sitting on a rooftop overlooking the scene, he ordered his officers to throw him out of the city. In a heated interchange, Scovel struck out at Shafter with both his fists but missed. Other correspondents who witnessed the episode generally thought Shafter deserved getting hit. Hare insisted that Scovel hit Shafter because the old general had called him an unprintable name.[62] And Richard Harding Davis, the epitome of the well-mannered gentleman, said he had to get out of Santiago and stop covering the army because he, too, "was afraid he'd do what Scovel did."[63] The whole affair cost Scovel his job and is responsible, probably, for his subsequent historical obscurity, for after Santiago he drops out of sight.

CONCLUSION

The argument made this far is that, first, traditional historical writing on the Spanish American War and on the press of the period has done more to obscure than to make clear the complexities of the times. Secondly, I have tried to divest the war correspondent of stereotypical traits by documenting the problems involved in covering the Cuban uprising. Finally, I would like to point out some of the problems we make for ourselves when we apply certain labels to the correspondent at the end of the nineteenth century.

The term romantic when applied to the war reporter of 1895, as a label, may help us to understand in a broad way how the reporter looked at his job, at the war, and at life in general. However, at the same time, the simplicity of the label has a way of blinding us to the complexity of what a reporter

saw, felt and wrote about. In our ordinary everyday conversations, when we speak of romantic people, we usually mean people who see the world through rose-colored glasses. In other words, we mean that the romantics of the world do not see things as they really are. Applied to war reporters, the label leads us to dismiss them as naive, enthusiastic to a fault, and blind to the horrors of war which to their unsophisticated, gullible minds was a grand adventure. The implication of this failure to take the reporters of the nineties seriously is that "we know better."

A second, equally simplistic term to discribe the situation is display: the tendency of the reporter to arrange himself in an eye-catching manner against a backdrop of battle. Unfortunately display is a merchandising term and may be used, inappropriately I think, to support strictly Marxist interpretations of the so-called capitalist press. Nevertheless, the term is helpful because it adds another dimension to the romantic dualisms generally used to define the period.

Against the background of a thundering cannon, the reporter stood, the epitome of the flamboyant romantic. He would be, for instance, nonchalant in the midst of grave dangers or he would assume the manner of a casual tension. He cultivated brash initiative and highbrow gentility. He could exude a devil-may-care attitude when faced with the ruthlessness of war and, at one and the same moment, emanate a blunt and realistic appreciation on the dangers to which he was submitting himself. In all his words and deeds he saw the world in terms of energy and will.

Everything about the Spanish American war correspondent suggests he divided the world into camps of virtue and vice. What needs to be demonstrated about this apparently simple view of reality is that each polarity has multiple levels of meanings. In other words, the simplicity of dividing the world into

opposite forces does not preclude complexity within each category.

What is really important as an aid to our understanding the war correspondent of the 1890s is that just as romance literature is de te fabula, so too was the "romantic" news report. The message of the newspaper story, the message of the reporter writing it was de te fabula: this story is about you.[64]

The story of Evangelina Cisneros is a clear example not only of the news report but also as evidence of the way war correspondents thought of life. Even the most vociferous critic of the fabrications which were at that time coming out of Key West, George Bronson Rea, had only good to say of the Journal's Karl Decker in his role as liberator of the woman.[65]

Cisneros was the seventeen-year-old daughter of a well-know revolutionary. The military governor of the Isle of Pines, Colonel Jose Berrez, allegedly tried to rape the woman, whom they had confined because of her father's anti-Spanish activities. Other political prisoners responded to Cisneros's cries for help and rescued her from the advances of the colonel. Berrez told Weyler, however, that the woman had enticed him into her room where the men were hiding, waiting for an opportunity to kill him and excape. After listening to Berrez's story, Weyler had Cisneros transferred to a jail in Havana.

Cisneros and her story had all the conventions of romance. Of central importance was her threatened virginity, which in romance literature is the symbol of the heroine's independence. All the Cisneros saga needed was a gallant rescue. Hearst provided the rescue in the person of Kark Decker, who helped her escape the Havana prison and disguised her as a sailor so she could walk the streets in broad daylight without being recognized.[66]

Stories of this kind are used by historians to designate the yellow press. Some reduce all motivation on the part of its editors to boosting circulation.[67] And in that regard I think we miss the whole point. The real point is that the most widely read papers in New York were the Journal and the World and therefore they provide us with cultural documentation. Much work remains to be done in this area. Here I am simply suggesting that stories like that of Cisneros were not so much attempts to increase circulation: they represented the acting out of a struggle between right and wrong, good and evil. In the case of Cisneros, it meant the liberation of a women from the hands of the ruthless and corrupt. It was a real life adventure demonstrating clearly the accepted values of the American community.

NOTES

1. Darius Starr to his mother, 20 October 1863, Darius Starr Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham.
2. Traditional treatments of the press can be found in Edwin Emery, The Press and America (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972); John Tebbel, The Compact History of the American Newspaper (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1969); Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States Throughout 250 Years (New York: Macmillan, 1947); Bernard A. Weisberger, The American Newspaperman. The Chicago History of American Civilization, Daniel Boorstein, Editor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Charles Brown, The Correspondent's War (New York: Scribners, 1967); Joseph Mathews, Reporting the Wars (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957). A less traditional history is Michael Schudson's Discovering the News (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
3. Philip Foner, The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, Vol. I (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 163.
4. Philip Knightley, The First Casualty (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1975), 43. See also Joseph E. Wizan, The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press (New York: Columbia University, 1934).
5. New York Evening Post, 19 February 1898. An argument against the "newspaper habit" and its vicious consequences is also made by Delos F. Wilcox, a college professor. Wilcox maintained that the newspaper wasted time, loaded the mind with cheap literature, developed an aversion for books and sustained thought, and made the intellectual life of its readers one continuous series of petty excitements. See "The American Newspaper: A Study in Social Psychology," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 12 (July, 1900) 56-92.

6. Here I am adapting the arguments of Northrup Frye, whose analysis focuses on nineteenth century literature. See The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 25.
7. "Joseph Pulitzer and the New Journalism," Chatauquan 65 (January, 1912), 157.
8. James W. Carey, "What is Wrong with Journalism Education," Journalism History 1 (Spring, 1974), 4.
9. This vein of historical interpretation relies on accepted stereotypes of the nineties, rather than on factual documentation. An example of this kind of analysis is Larzer Ziff's, The American 1890s: Life and Times of a Lost Generation (New York: Viking Press, 1966).
10. Arthur Brisbane, "The Modern Newspaper in War Time," Cosmopolitan 25 (September, 1890), 550; Cecil Carnes, Jimmy Hare: News Photographer; Half a Century with a Camera (New York: Macmillan, 1940), 60; "Newspaper Correspondents in War," Review of Reviews 9 (November, 1898); 538-41.
11. Brisbane, 550.
12. Richard Harding Davis, "Our Correspondents in Cuba and Puerto Rico," Harper's Monthly 98 (May, 1899), 939. For corroborating material see "Newspapermen in the War," Literary Digest 17 (15 October, 1898). 455-57.
13. Davis, "Our Correspondents," 941.
14. See George B. McCutcheon to Charles Belmont Davis, 3 April 1916, Richard Harding Davis Papers, Aldermann Library University of Virginia, Charlottsville. Hereafter unless otherwise noted, all references to Davis will be taken from this collection.

15. George Kennan, undated entry into Cuban Notebook #1, George Kennan Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C. Hereafter, unless otherwise noted, all references will be taken from this collection.
16. Davis to his mother, 19 December 1896. For an analysis of the factual recordings in reportage see M.S. Mander, Pen and Sword, Ph.D. dissertation, Institute of Communications Research, University of Illinois, 1979.
17. See Frye's analysis of the structure of romance.
18. John C. Hemment, Cannon and Camera (New York: Appleton, 1898), 131-32.
19. Stephen Bonsal, quoted by M. L. Stein, Under Fire: The Story of American War Correspondents (New York: Julian Messner, 1968), 46-7.
20. I have misplaced my source for this note. I refer the reader to Erik Erickson, who once wrote the following: "I have mislaid this reference; but no fair-minded reader will suspect me of having invented this quotation." See Young Man Luther (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), 268.
21. Davis to his mother, 9 July 1898. The phrase "living like pigs" denotes a lack of luxury rather than unclean living conditions. For similar usage see Edith Wharton, House of Mirth (New York: New American Library, 1964).
22. Davis to Gus, 1896.
23. Gomez's military strategy is best analyzed in Foner, I, 212, 213, 216.
24. Rea, Facts, 235.
25. Grover Flint, Marching with Gomez (New York: Lamsom Wolffe and Co., 1898), 68. Where a correspondent ate and slept depended on the personal preferences of the commanding officer. Gomez never camped in houses. There was not, therefore, the general staff mess in his camp as there had been in Lacret's. In Gomez's camp two staff officers messed together; their assistentes did the cooking. General Gomez messed with General Vega, his chief-of-staff, two of his soldiers, and whichever correspondent was with his forces. See Flint, 129, 150.

26. Rea, Facts, 318.
27. Davis to his mother, 19 December 1896.
28. Davis to his mother, 24 January 1897.
29. Ibid. See also Davis to Gus, undated letter in the 1897 file.
30. Davis to his mother, 15 January 1897.
31. Davis to his mother, 19 January 1897.
32. Davis to his mother, 16 January 1897.
33. Davis to his mother, 24 January 1897. For a description of the railway system see R. H. Davis, Cuba in Wartime (New York: Scribners, 1897), 79.
34. Rea, 132.
35. George Kennan, Cuban Notebook #1.
36. Davis to his family, 26 December 1896.
37. John R. Spears, "Afloat for News in War Times," Scribners (October, 1898), 504.
38. Kennan makes several notes about this irritating circumstance in his notebooks.
39. Davis complains of crew mutinies in telegram to his mother, 30 December 1896.
40. Davis to his family, 30 April 1898. Melville Stone was general manager of the Associated Press.
41. Davis to Gus, 26 July 1898.
42. Rea, 24-5.
43. James Creelman, On the Great Highway (Boston: Lothrop Publishing Co., 1901), 169.
44. Ibid., 162.
45. Rea, Facts, xvii.
46. Ibid., xvii-xviii.
47. Foner, I, 147.

48. Rea, Facts, 239-42. Foner notes that, with the exception of Grover Flint, Gomez usually was indifferent to American reporters (see I,31).

49. Even later Cuban historians, e.g., Jose Manuel Perez Cabrera in Historiographia de Cuba (Mexica, 1962: 291-2), praise Flint for his spirit of justice and his fine drawings. See Foner, I, 31.

50. Grover Flint, Marching with Gomez: A War Correspondent's Field Notebook Kept During Four Months with the Cuban Army (New York: Wolffe, 1898), 194-5.

51. Brown, The Correspondent's War, 114.

52. George Bronson Rea, "The Night of the Explosion in Havana," Harpers Weekly 96 (5 March 1898), 222.

53. For the cause of the explosion of the Maine, see Hugh Thomas, Cuba; or the Pursuit of Freedom (London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1971), 364. For some detail regarding Shafter's military problems see Richard Goldhurst, Pipe Clay and Drill; John J. Pershing: The Classic American Soldier (New York: Boder's Digest Press, 1977), 70-1.

54. Davis to his mother, 24 January 1897.

55. Frank Freidel, The Splendid Little War (Boston; Little, Brown, 1958), 62.

56. Carnes, 61.

57. Hemment, 195.

58. Ibid., 75-6.

59. Davis to his mother, 7 July 1898.

60. Davis to Gus, 26 July 1898.

61. Steward H. Holbrook, Lost Men of American History (New York; Macmillan, 1946), 288-9. Holbrook devoted most of chap. 14 to Shafter. For another sympathetic treatment of Shafter, see Goldhurst, 70ff.

62. Carnes, 94-5.

63. Davis to Gus, 26 July 1898. Despite peer approval of his action, Scovel was fired, although Davis reported that Scovel was fired for his report on the cowardly conduct of New York's Seventy-First regiment. For Davis's remarks, see "Our Correspondents in Cuba and Puerto Rico," Harper's Monthly 98 (May 1899), 938-48. For Hare's account, see Carnes, 94-5.

64. See Frye's analysis of romance, especially 186ff.

65. Rea, 234.

66. New York Journal, 20 August 1897, 3 September, 1897, 8 October 1897, 15 October 1897.

67. Hugh Thomas, p. 341, gives the following circulation figures; Pulitzer's World, 800,000; Hearst's Journal, 700,000; the combined circulation for the Herald, Tribune, Post, and Times, 225,000. The Pulitzer's paper and the smaller New York Papers belonged to the Associated Press, too. Hearst's membership in the A.P. was vetoed by Pulitzer, so he was at this time getting his International News Service off the ground.